

Space2breathe - Board Report August 2021

Space2Breathe started in February 2021 in response to the growing mental health pressures that families were facing during lockdown. Families in our community felt isolated, lonely and many parents were struggling with working from home while trying to home-school several children, look after pre-schoolers, and run their households. They needed somewhere else to 'breathe'.

Hale Community Centre, St George's Church in Badshot Lea, and space2grow – a community gardening space with an indoor area in central Farnham – each opened their doors to families who needed to get out of the home and into a different space.

Over the past 6 months Space2Breathe has had a direct impact in supporting over a dozen families with children of ages ranging from 11 months to 14 years old. Supported by 22 volunteers. Over 80 hours of support was provided to families by volunteers since the project commenced

The families have been coming to either Hale CC or Space2grow every week, some families twice a week, supported by our wonderful volunteers. In these spaces the families have been able to be in a different space, other than the four walls at home, the children have different things to play with, mum gets a break from the children and can talk to another adult. A quote from one mum, "*We get so much out of our sessions - they are a lifesaver*". What has been most prominent is the need for the mums to chat to another adult and to have someone to listen to them as many are feeling very isolated and alone.

Single mum of three young girls said, "I just wanted to say what an awesome idea Space2Breathe is, and how amazing the volunteers are for me and the girls. It came at just the right time and I am so grateful. I feel like I spend most of my time separating angry and anxious children and this has made a big difference". Mum of 4 young children says, "We get so much out of our sessions - they are a lifesaver".

In the last week of the Easter holidays (week commencing 12th April) Hale Community Centre, in partnership with Space2Breathe, was buzzing with its first families' activity week. Over 40 local families took part in activities ranging from football skills with Aldershot Football Club (35 kids), cooking classes with Coral Turan from Coral's Cookery School (6 families), dancing with Boogie Pumps and Illusion Dance (34 kids), Easter crafts and Easter egg hunts (21 families). The five days of activities were offered to local families for free through generous funding from The Farnham Lions, Hale Cottage Trust, Aldershot Football Club and the session leaders. The week was made possible with the support of the Space2Breathe volunteers who generously gave their time to set up and facilitate the sessions. Mum of two said "My girls loved it and would love to come again it was brilliant" Sarah, mum of three boys said it was amazing and the volunteers were so friendly". Over 90% of the parents who gave their feedback on the week said it had a positive effect on their mental health and well-being.

Since the children have been back at school this summer term Space2Breathe has continued to offer 1-2-1 support sessions to 3 families supported by 6 volunteers. The 1-2-1 support has now paused over the summer holidays at the request of the families and we shall evaluate the need before the term commences in September.

In the May half term Space2breathe offered cooking with Coral for 6 families and Boogie pumps dance for 20 children.

Knowing the space2breathe sessions were needed mostly by the mums we ran a half term long weekly weaving workshop, with a creche, for the mums to come to learn new skills but most importantly meet other mums and chat as they have similar experiences to share. The aim of this was for mums to start to build a network of friends and build up a support group amongst themselves. This supported 8 mums.

Since February space2breathe offered support to many families at a critical time during lockdown, it also provided a fantastic week of events which had a positive impact on the mental health and well-being of those who attended. The main request from feedback received was to have more family events, this needs to be the focus going forwards.

Jocelyn Close
S2B Co-ordinator